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ABSTRACT

The study reported in this document tracked a cohort of Indiana freshmen (about 47,000) with reported majors and categorized them as associate and baccalaureate, resident and nonresident, and part-time and full-time students. The objective to determine how these students fared in the course of the 4 years examined (fiscal years 1985-88). Included in the findings for associate students were: 26 percent of associate students were full-time and only 12 percent had dropped out, half the part-time associates dropped out, and cumulative grade-point averages for part-time students were slightly higher than for full-time students. Findings for baccalaureate students included the facts that 61 percent were full-time, of whom only 8 percent dropped out, while nearly 40 percent of the part-time students dropped out. About half of the students in the study were still in school at the study's completion; thus it was determined that it was too early to make a final assessment on this class. (GLR)

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RETENTION AND ATTRITION OF DECLARED FRESHMEN

(Discussion Item)

March 10, 1989

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Commission for Higher Education
101 West Ohio Street, Suite 550
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 232-1900

HE023624

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COMMISSION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
Friday, March 10, 1989

DISCUSSION ITEM B: Report on Retention and Attrition of 1984-85 Declared Freshmen

Staff Recommendation

For information only.

Background

The 1987 General Assembly amended IC 20-12-0.5-8 to require the Commission to

"Develop a definition for and report biennally to the:

(A) General Assembly;
(B) Governor; and
(C) Commission of Vocational and Technical Education;

on attrition and persistence rates by students enrolled in state vocational education."

Pursuant to that statute the Commission has undertaken to develop a database from which attrition/retention studies could be generated. No attempt has been made to distinguish and report students with vocational majors from other programs. In constructing this database, it was as efficient to include all students as it was for a particular subset. In so doing, we provide an opportunity for the Commission to pursue its interest and responsibilities for students in all programs and at all levels.

Staff derived a special database from the Commission's Student Information System (SIS) resources which served as the basis for this report and which will provide data for further analyses. This report has been circulated to the institutions.

At the next Commission meeting, staff will seek approval to forward the report as required.

Supporting Documents

"Retention and Persistence Rates of Students Enrolled as Declared Freshmen in 1984-85," dated March 10, 1989

Commission for Higher Education

RETENTION AND PERSISTENCE RATES OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AS DECLARED FRESHMEN IN 1984-85

– March 10, 1989 –

101 West Ohio Street, Suite 550
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
(317) 232-1900

Agenda 18

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order for statistics on retention/attrition rates to be meaningful and useful for analytic purposes, they must deal with discrete sets of students with common expectations and circumstances. Hence, the study tracked a cohort of freshmen with reported majors and categorized them as associate and baccalaureate, resident and nonresident, and part-time and full-time students. The data available to this study cover only the four years of FY85 through FY88 which is an adequate timespan to obtain a definitive picture of the experience of associate (two-year) students but is only enough to give a sense of the trend for baccalaureate students. Some of the salient findings for Hoosier students in this cohort are outlined below.

For Associate Students:

- Twenty-six percent of associate students were full-time.
- Retention rates for these students were good. Only twelve percent dropped out while just less than half achieved a degree. The remainder are continuing their studies.
- Contrast this with the experience of part-time students. Half dropped out, only eight percent were able to get a degree in four years and forty-two percent are continuing.
- The persisting part-time students have on average completed less than half the course requirements in four years. At that rate it will take them over eight years to get an associate degree.
- Most part-time students are at IVTC campuses and Vincennes where their drop-out rates range from 48 percent to 60 percent.
- The cumulative grade-point average for part-time students is slightly higher than for full-time students which suggests that academic preparation and ability are not significant factors in the slow rate of progress for part-time students.
- In general, the full-time students at four-year campuses were much more likely to go on and obtain a baccalaureate than their counterparts at the two-year institutions.
- At the four-year campuses, the full-time persisting associate students attempted considerably more credit hours than necessary for an associate degree yet did not achieve one. This suggests that many were initially misclassified or changed their minds after FY85.
- Likewise, many associate persisters at the two-year institutions had attempted more than enough credit hours for a degree without getting one. However, misclassification is not a likely factor in these cases.

For Baccalaureate Students:

- Sixty-one percent of the baccalaureate students were full-time students, more than twice the percentage of associate students who are full-time.
- Retention rates for the full-time students were good. Ninety-two percent either completed a degree program (47%) or were still in school (41%). Eight percent dropped out.
- Over thirty percent of the full-time students obtained a degree; this number will increase in next year's study when this cohort's students who are in five-year baccalaureate programs will graduate.
- Nearly forty percent of the part-time students dropped out.
- The commuter campuses cater to the part-time student and might be expected to have better success with this type of student but they seem to do no better than the residential campuses and vice versa.

The 1987 General Assembly amended IC 20-12-0.5-8 to require the Commission to

"Develop a definition for and report biennially to the:

(A) general assembly;
(B) governor; and
(C) commission of vocational and technical education;

on attrition and persistence rates by students enrolled in state vocational education."

Pursuant to that statute the Commission has undertaken to develop a database from which attrition/retention studies could be generated. No attempt has been made to distinguish and report students with vocational majors from other programs. In constructing this database, it was as efficient to include all students as it was for a particular subset. In so doing, we provide an opportunity for the Commission to pursue its interest and responsibilities for students in all programs and at all levels.

While the Commission has been collecting data from the institutions on an annual student-by-student basis through its Student Information System (SIS) since 1978-79, not all of it is usable for retention studies. In using such data to track a student from one year to the next and from one campus to the next in order to determine the outcome of his/her educational experience, it is necessary that a single identifier be used throughout for that student. It was not until the 1984-85 SIS submission that the public institutions uniformly reported students' social security numbers as student identifiers (except where forbidden by the student or where no social security number had been issued—a small fraction of the student population). With the 1987-88 SIS report, the minimum four years of data necessary for a meaningful start on retention studies became available.

This report is the first of a series of retention studies the Commission intends to undertake to satisfy not only its reporting requirements but also to support its own mission. This report describes the experience of a particular group of students in achieving their declared objectives. Specifically, Hoosier students who were freshmen in 1984-85 and who had stated degree objectives were identified and their progress traced over four years of SIS data. These students represent nearly 21 percent of the public higher education population in FY85. No SIS data for independent institutions was used in tracking these students; other studies by Commission staff have indicated that the movement of students between the public and private sectors is negligible.

The students in this study were confined to those who had a stated major in FY85 because they were the only students whose program was apparent from the data. Those freshmen who were not classified in a program in their first year but who later entered a program and perhaps got a degree are excluded as are the casual, "courses only" students and those who were taking a bare minimum of courses to achieve a certain type of employment. The data simply do not contain any discrimating element that describes other than degree-seeking goals.

The study was limited to Hoosiers because they are the Commission's first consideration and it was felt that out-of-state students in general have greater incentives to finish and to finish on time than do residents. Also, full-time students were separated from part-time students to facilitate inter-institutional comparisons. As is evident from the attached

The study was limited to Hoosiers because they are the Commission's first consideration and it was felt that out-of-state students in general have greater incentives to finish and to finish on time than do residents. Also, full-time students were separated from part-time students to facilitate inter-institutional comparisons. As is evident from the attached tables, the success rate of full-time students is greater no matter where they attend school. Since there is a wide variation in the mix of part-time to full-time students throughout the public institutions, blending all students together would favor campuses with higher proportions of full-time students in inter-campus comparisons.

As stated above, these students were tracked through four years of SIS data, all that is available as this time. Four years is adequate time for full-time or near full-time students to achieve associate degrees which are nominally two years in length. Since many students, particularly those who undertake less than four-year programs, are poorly prepared for college-level work and must take non-credit remedial courses, the actual time needed to earn an associate degree is often more than two years.
In the years to follow, the annual SIS data will be added to the current retention database and these same students will be tracked for additional years. The experience gained in these studies will be used to determine over how many years associate and baccalaureate students should be tracked. It is apparent now that additional years are required to make a final assessment on the FY85 baccalaureate, but how many is enough—five, six, seven? Perhaps four years will be adequate for the associate freshmen, but should next year's study provide significant gains, the standard study time span will have to be lengthened to five or perhaps more years.

Part-time/full-time classification was based on the student's attendance pattern over the four years under consideration rather than on their status in the first year. If a student was a full-time student in half or more of the years he/she attended, he/she was designated full-time, otherwise part-time. This approach was forced by the nature of the SIS data.

Full-time/part-time status is normally determined from the number of credit hours reported on the SIS record. However, a large number of students, particularly at the two-year institutions, take remedial, non-credit courses in their first year of school, and therefore appear to be part-time when evaluated solely on the basis of credit hours. Unfortunately, non-credit hours of instruction are not generally available in SIS, making it impossible to assess fully a student's course load, hence this "average" approach which is, nonetheless, a fair method of classification.

Students attending more than one campus in 1984-85 but who remained in the same institution were classified as "Multiple-campus, (institution name)." Those who attended campuses of different systems in FY85 are identified as "Multiple-Institutional."

As stated above, the object of the study was to determine how these students fared in the course of the four years examined. The accompanying tables broadly group them into three areas by their success or lack of it:

1. Completers — These are students who achieve a degree or certificate in the four years studied. The three subclasses categorize them further as to whether they achieved their original goal, "stopped out" at a lower degree level or went on to a higher goal. In this last category are included those who either raised their aspirations and achieved them, were misclassified in FY85, or used a declared degree objective as an intermediate goal on the path to a higher degree. Since completers are those FY85

freshmen who achieved a degree anywhere within Indiana public higher education institutions, the third subclassification in the associate tables also serves as a measure of the extent to which students are successful in using two-year institutions as stepping-stones to baccalaureates at four-year institutions.

2. Persisters — These students undertook studies in two, three or four years without achieving any sort of degree. The "Average Attempted Credit Hours" are the number of semester hours these students have attempted on average. This statistic is an attempt to determine just how far along these students are in their studies. (The Commission's SIS system collects only attempted hours and not completed hours.) For those persisters who were in school in FY88, the first year for which the cumulative grade-point average was collected in SIS, their average cumulative GPA is reported in the third column under "Persisters." Because these data were not available for all persisters, it is not a conclusive indicator of how well these students are doing but it does provide a general understanding.

3. Dropouts — Freshmen who started in FY85 and did not attend school again in the next three years anywhere within Indiana public institutions are categorized as dropouts. In succeeding years of this study, a dropout will be defined as any student who does not appear for the last three years of the study's time span. Unfortunately, the cumulative GPA for these students is not going to be available for another three years. Further, the SIS data contain no other information that might provide insight into what factors might be associated with these students.

About half of the students in this study are still "persisters," people who will become either completers or dropouts in future studies. With that large a number of outcomes still unknown, it is too early to make a final assessment on this class.

Indiana Public Higher Education

Hoosier Full-time Declared Associate Freshmen of FY85 Tracked Thru FY88

		Completers			Persisters			
	(1) Number	(2) One or More Associate	(3) Certificate Only	(4) Assoc. and/or Higher Degree	(5) Percent	(6) Average Attempted Credit Hours	(7) Average Cum. GPA in Fourth Year	(8) Dropouts
Indiana University								
IU-Bloomington	30	30.0%	3.3%	13.3%	46.7%	96	2.87	6.7%
IU-East	17	29.4%	5.9%	11.8%	52.9%	75	3.04	0.0%
IU-Kokomo	69	47.8%	2.9%	17.4%	18.8%	81	2.34	13.0%
IU-Northwest	49	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	59.2%	75	2.45	26.5%
IU-South Bend	18	0.0%	66.7%	5.6%	27.8%	87	2.67	0.0%
IU-Southeast	25	24.0%	0.0%	8.0%	56.0%	81	2.90	12.0%
IUPUI	202	22.8%	5.9%	6.0%	55.4%	84	2.48	9.9%
Multi-Campus, IU	21	33.3%	9.5%	19.1%	33.3%	72	2.78	4.8%
Purdue University								
PU-West Lafayette	447	27.3%	0.0%	32.7%	34.0%	93	2.47	6.0%
PU-Calumet	301	48.9%	0.0%	19.2%	26.6%	78	2.52	5.3%
PU-North Central	161	56.5%	0.0%	9.3%	24.2%	69	2.66	9.9%
IUPU-Fort Wayne	314	41.4%	2.9%	7.3%	41.1%	72	2.60	7.3%
Multi-Campus, PU	46	28.3%	0.0%	43.4%	26.1%	78	2.84	2.2%
Indiana State University	74	29.7%	0.0%	10.8%	35.1%	87	2.57	24.3%
Univ of Southern Indiana	41	39.0%	0.0%	0.0%	41.5%	66	2.65	19.5%
Ball State University	219	38.8%	0.0%	9.1%	39.3%	81	2.67	12.8%
Vincennes	2,345	39.7%	0.7%	2.7%	43.3%	75	2.52	13.6%
Ind Vocational Tech Inst								
IVTC-Northwest (1)	250	24.0%	3.6%	0.4%	54.0%	60	2.64	18.0%
IVTC-North Central (2	60	45.0%	1.7%	0.0%	48.3%	57	2.83	5.0%
IVTC-Northeast (3)	88	38.7%	2.3%	0.0%	44.3%	51	2.19	14.8%
IVTC-Lafayette (4)	40	27.5%	5.0%	2.5%	42.5%	69	2.56	22.5%
IVTC-Kokomo (5)	55	34.5%	7.3%	0.0%	41.8%	51	2.94	16.4%
IVTC-East Central (6)	76	31.6%	1.3%	0.0%	48.7%	60	2.72	18.4%
IVTC-Wabash Valley (7	83	33.7%	1.2%	1.2%	48.2%	57	2.69	15.7%
IVTC-Central Indiana	137	23.4%	0.7%	0.0%	51.8%	51	2.47	24.1%
IVTC-Whitewater (9)	36	25.0%	2.8%	0.0%	50.0%	57	2.15	22.2%
IVTC-Columbus (10)	86	34.9%	5.8%	0.0%	43.0%	54	2.58	16.3%
IVTC-Southeast (11)	22	50.0%	9.1%	0.0%	31.8%	57	2.79	9.1%
IVTC-Southwest (12)	65	21.5%	4.6%	1.5%	46.2%	51	2.71	26.2%
IVTC-South Central (1	54	22.2%	0.0%	0.0%	59.3%	60	2.41	18.5%
Multi-Campus IVTC	5	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	80.0%	57	2.22	20.0%
Multi-Institutional	692	19.7%	0.7%	37.9%	34.4%	87	2.59	7.4%
Statewide	6,128	34.6%	1.5%	10.7%	41.1%	75	2.56	12.2%

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Notes:

Column (4) — Achieved an associate degree plus a higher degree or achieved only a higher degree.
Column (6) — Semester hours.
Column (7) — Average known cumulative grade-point average for persisters in school in FY88, the only year for which this data is available.

Indiana Public Higher Education

Hoosier Full-time Declared Baccalaureate Freshmen of FY85 Tracked Thru FY88

		Completers			Persisters			
	(1) Number	(2) One or More Baccalaureate	(3) Lower degree Only	(4) Bacc. and/or Higher Degree	(5) Percent	(6) Average Attempted Credit Hours	(7) Average cum. GPA in Fourth Year	(8) Dropouts
Indiana University								
IU-Bloomington	2,325	30.6%	2.0%	0.0%	60.3%	102	2.63	7.1%
IU-East	64	7.8%	20.3%	0.0%	57.8%	78	3.04	14.1%
IU-Kokomo	168	6.5%	25.0%	0.0%	56.0%	78	2.80	12.5%
IU-Northwest	401	11.0%	9.2%	0.0%	69.1%	81	2.51	10.7%
IU-South Bend	158	15.8%	5.1%	0.0%	67.1%	84	2.69	12.0%
IU-Southeast	149	13.4%	5.4%	0.0%	73.2%	90	2.84	8.1%
IUPUI	856	12.0%	6.2%	0.0%	72.3%	84	2.62	9.5%
Multi-Campus, IU	596	46.7%	2.5%	1.7%	45.3%	105	2.57	3.9%
Purdue University								
PU-West Lafayette	3,190	29.0%	2.7%	0.0%	63.6%	108	2.63	4.6%
PU-Calumet	359	26.5%	4.7%	0.0%	60.7%	93	2.69	8.1%
PU-North Central	131	20.6%	12.2%	0.0%	60.3%	84	2.58	6.9%
IUPU-Fort Wayne	312	13.8%	10.3%	0.0%	65.4%	90	2.77	10.6%
Multi-Campus, PU	179	52.5%	3.4%	0.0%	37.4%	108	2.61	6.7%
Indiana State University	1,048	11.6%	3.4%	0.0%	69.9%	90	2.51	15.0%
Univ of Southern Indiana	340	12.9%	4.7%	0.3%	71.8%	84	2.66	10.3%
Ball State University	2,912	28.9%	2.6%	0.0%	58.8%	102	2.60	9.5%
Multi-Institutional	833	38.0%	7.6%	0.2%	49.0%	102	2.62	5.2%
Statewide	14,021	26.5%	4.1%	0.1%	61.4%	99	2.62	8.0%

Notes:

Column (4) — Achieved a baccalaureate degree plus a higher degree or achieved only a higher degree.
Column (6) — Semester hours.
Column (7) — Average known cumulative grade-point average for persisters in school in FY88, the only year for which this data is available.

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Indiana Public Higher Education

Hoosier Part-time Declared Associate Freshmen of FY85 Tracked Thru FY88

	(1) Number	Completers (2) One or More Associate	Completers (3) Certificate Only	Completers (4) Assoc. and/or Higher Degree	(5) Persisters Percent	(6) Persisters Average Attempted Credit Hours	(7) Persisters Average cum. GPA in Fourth Year	(8) Dropouts
Indiana University								
IU-Bloomington	12	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	39	1.74	50.0%
IU-East	74	24.3%	4.1%	0.0%	41.9%	33	2.92	29.7%
IU-Kokomo	232	18.1%	0.4%	0.8%	56.5%	27	2.79	24.1%
IU-Northwest	158	10.1%	3.2%	0.0%	38.6%	30	2.93	48.1%
IU-South Bend	12	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	21	3.31	50.0%
IU-Southeast	88	6.8%	0.0%	0.0%	55.7%	30	2.75	37.5%
IUPUI	569	4.2%	0.5%	0.0%	60.8%	33	2.60	34.4%
Multi-Campus, IU	18	33.3%	0.0%	5.6%	27.8%	42	2.73	33.3%
Purdue University								
PU-West Lafayette	200	11.5%	0.0%	0.0%	54.5%	30	2.95	34.0%
PU-Calumet	492	20.9%	0.6%	3.0%	43.9%	33	2.82	31.5%
PU-North Central	454	19.1%	0.0%	0.4%	45.2%	30	2.93	35.2%
IUPU-Fort Wayne	1,143	11.4%	0.9%	0.2%	52.6%	27	2.81	35.0%
Multi-Campus, PU	9	44.4%	0.0%	0.0%	55.6%	45	2.62	0.0%
Indiana State University	33	3.0%	0.0%	0.0%	42.4%	33	2.55	54.5%
Univ of Southern Indiana	89	1.1%	2.2%	0.0%	47.2%	27	2.97	49.4%
Ball State University	233	6.4%	0.0%	3.0%	39.5%	27	2.72	51.1%
Vincennes	3,332	5.0%	0.2%	0.2%	36.4%	24	3.07	58.2%
Ind Vocational Tech Inst								
IVTC-Northwest (1)	1,721	2.9%	1.1%	0.2%	40.0%	27	2.57	55.8%
IVTC-North Central (2	866	3.3%	0.8%	0.0%	44.1%	27	2.71	51.7%
IVTC-Northeast (3)	1,157	7.5%	0.6%	0.0%	41.9%	24	2.98	50.0%
IVTC-Lafayette (4)	407	8.9%	1.2%	0.0%	36.9%	21	2.94	53.1%
IVTC-Kokomo (5)	568	3.0%	1.6%	0.0%	35.4%	24	2.63	60.0%
IVTC-East Central (6)	899	5.5%	1.9%	0.0%	36.0%	27	2.93	56.6%
IVTC-Wabash Valley (7	701	4.0%	0.4%	0.0%	37.1%	24	3.19	58.5%
IVTC-Central Indiana	1,510	3.3%	0.3%	0.0%	41.2%	27	2.68	55.2%
IVTC-Whitewater (9)	423	5.0%	1.7%	0.0%	36.9%	24	2.89	56.5%
IVTC-Columbus (10)	584	6.3%	1.5%	0.2%	44.3%	30	2.85	47.6%
IVTC-Southeast (11)	133	7.5%	0.8%	0.0%	33.1%	27	2.90	58.6%
IVTC-Southwest (12)	596	2.9%	3.7%	0.0%	38.3%	27	2.81	55.2%
IVTC-South Central (1	363	7.4%	0.3%	0.3%	39.4%	30	2.90	52.6%
Multi-Campus IVTC	27	7.4%	3.7%	0.0%	33.3%	30	2.90	55.6%
Multi-Institutional	574	10.5%	1.4%	7.1%	59.6%	36	2.62	21.4%
Statewide	17,677	6.5%	0.9%	0.5%	42.0%	27	2.83	50.1%

Notes:

Column (4) — Achieved an associate degree plus a higher degree or achieved only a higher degree.

Column (6) — Semester hours.

Column (7) — Average known cumulative grade-point average for persisters in school in FY88, the only year for which this data is available.

Indiana Public Higher Education

Hoosier Part-time Declared Baccalaureate Freshmen of FY85 Tracked Thru FY88

	(1) Number	Completers (2) One or More Baccalaureate	Completers (3) Lower Degree Only	Completers (4) Bacc. and/or Higher Degree	Persisters (5) Percent	Persisters (6) Average Attempted Credit Hours	Persisters (7) Average cum. GPA in Fourth Year	(8) Dropouts
Indiana University								
IU-Bloomington	350	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	57.7%	42	2.30	41.7%
IU-East	228	0.4%	7.0%	0.0%	47.4%	30	2.91	45.2%
IU-Kokomo	584	0.5%	15.8%	0.0%	47.9%	33	2.72	35.8%
IU-Northwest	766	0.0%	5.4%	0.0%	51.3%	36	2.56	43.3%
IU-South Bend	500	2.0%	2.4%	0.0%	48.8%	33	2.77	46.8%
IU-Southeast	283	2.1%	4.2%	0.0%	55.1%	33	2.63	38.5%
IUPUI	2,001	0.3%	3.0%	0.0%	59.2%	33	2.57	37.5%
Multi-Campus, IU	237	52.7%	10.1%	0.4%	30.4%	39	2.54	6.3%
Purdue University								
PU-West Lafayette	427	0.9%	0.2%	0.0%	61.4%	51	2.77	37.5%
PU-Calumet	336	1.2%	1.5%	0.0%	56.8%	36	2.95	40.5%
PU-North Central	229	1.3%	21.8%	0.0%	49.3%	33	2.97	27.5%
IUPU-Fort Wayne	518	0.2%	6.2%	0.0%	58.1%	36	2.75	35.5%
Multi-Campus, PU	13	23.1%	0.0%	0.0%	69.2%	60	2.65	7.7%
Indiana State University	549	0.9%	2.9%	0.4%	50.3%	36	2.52	45.5%
Univ of Southern Indiana	656	1.1%	0.5%	0.3%	48.2%	30	2.68	50.0%
Ball State University	1,094	0.3%	1.7%	0.0%	48.9%	42	2.47	49.1%
Multi-Institutional	381	7.8%	10.2%	0.8%	60.9%	42	2.48	20.2%
Statewide	9,152	2.3%	4.6%	0.1%	53.3%	36	2.62	39.7%

Notes:

Column (4) — Achieved a baccalaureate degree plus a higher degree or achieved only a higher degree.
Column (6) — Semester hours.
Column (7) — Average known cumulative grade-point average for persisters in school in FY88, the only year for which this data is available.

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